

DEDICATION OF THE
SECOND PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

FEBRUARY 22, 1846

TRACTS FOR THE TIMES
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TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.

NO. 19.

THE BIBLE A SUFFICIENT CREED:

BEING

TWO DISCOURSES DELIVERED

AT THE

Dedication

OF THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

FORT WAYNE, IOWA,

FEBRUARY 22, 1846.

BY CHARLES BEECHER

BOSTON:

OFFICE OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD.

1846.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

FORT WAYNE, Feb. 25th, 1846.

REV. CHARLES BEECHER:—

Dear Sir,—The undersigned, having had the pleasure of hearing the Discourses delivered by you on the 22d inst., at the dedication of the 2d Presbyterian Church in Fort Wayne, take the liberty of requesting you to furnish a copy for publication. Regarding these Discourses as an able and fearless exposition of truths, which lie at the very foundation of Protestantism, and which seem for years to have been lost sight of by the great body of Protestant Christians, we are anxious that they should be put within the reach of all those who may feel an interest in the subjects discussed.

In assuming the ground which you occupy in relation to creeds, you will of course expect the censure of those who deliberately regard the Bible as an insufficient "rule of faith;" but we cannot believe that the great mass of Protestants, if properly enlightened, would be prepared to sustain systems, which insidiously, but effectually undermine the authority of the Bible, by a virtual denial of its own claims.

No intelligent mind can fail to see that the Protestant faith is entering upon a severe struggle. It is already assailed from within and without with mighty forces; and, in our opinion, the only banner under which Protestants can rally in the important struggle, with the smallest chance of success, must bear the inscription, *No Creed but the Bible: No Master but Christ.*

Very respectfully, yours &c.,
B. W. OAKLEY, JOHN HAMILTON, R. W. TAYLOR,
F. H. TYLER, H. M'CULLOCH.

FORT WAYNE, March 13th, 1846.

Gentlemen,—Herewith I transmit to you a revised copy of the two sermons to which you refer; with the sincere hope that their publication may tend to awaken inquiry, and lead to more thorough developements of truth on this all-important subject.

With sentiments of respect and affection, yours,

CHARLES BEECHER.

Messrs. Oakley, Hamilton, Taylor, Tyler & M'Culloch.

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FIRST DISCOURSE.

ON occasions like the present, when societies have met for the purpose of consecrating an edifice to the worship of God, it has been generally deemed appropriate to exhibit some of the leading views by which such societies profess to be governed.

This custom is peculiarly appropriate to our present circumstances.

There may have existed in some minds a degree of uncertainty as to the complexion of our sentiments, as well as to our ultimate chances of success; and while Providence seems smiling upon us in the latter particular, it is fit that we should do away with any prejudice that might result from the former.

This is emphatically a Protestant Church. Disregarding, therefore, the details of systematic theology, upon which Protestants may differ, I have thought it advisable to set forth that in which they ought to agree. In other words, I propose to explain, and to defend the fundamental principle of Protestantism.

To this end, I have selected for my text, the following words:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” — *II. Tim. iii. 16, 17.*

I shall endeavor to maintain, as here taught, the following propositions:

I. The Bible is a Creed, sufficient, under God's blessing, to regulate the belief, experience, and practice of the whole Christian world.

II. The substitution of any other Creed, for either of these purposes, is one step in APOSTACY.

The text mentions four things for which the Bible is profitable, previous to the orderly examination of which, we will ask, *How far is*

the Bible profitable? As any other book might be? Or to some surpassing degree? This our text fully declares.

The man of God, i. e. Pastor, Presbyter, or Bishop, (words in the New Testament, convertible,) is the one whose office in the Church, being most responsible, involves the most wants; nay, in a manner, *all* the wants of the whole Church. For every want which the humblest follower of Jesus feels, the pastor feels, besides those especially arising from his position. The needs and spiritual poverties of the Church, centre in him. Whatever, therefore, is his thorough furniture for all good works, is, *a fortiori*, the thorough furniture of that Church, in all its parts, and as a whole. It is to him our text declares how, and how far the Bible may be profitable.

Not so profitable as to supersede study. The context commends Timothy for having *known* the Scriptures from childhood. The perfection of a book is to reward, not supersede study. The Bible possesses no magic virtue, to penetrate through paper and binding, into his fingers, and so imbue his system; the Bible is no talisman, as ghostly fathers taught, to frighten fiends withal; the Bible must be

profitable, if at all, by being treated as books were designed to be treated, according to the laws of book-nature, i. e. by being read, studied, obeyed.

Not so profitable, either, as to supersede the use of lexicons, commentaries, and traditions. The Man of God may use these, according to his means, provided he use them rightly. How use them? As authoritative interpreters? God forbid! This transfers inspiration out of the Bible into tradition; and the question then is, Who shall interpret tradition? Shall he use private judgment to interpret tradition? If we answer "Yes," then how comes it that private judgment, thus innocent when applied to tradition, is so hurtful when applied to the Bible? If private judgment be a safe guide through an interminable swamp, why not upon an open highway?

If we answer "No," private judgment must not be trusted either in the Bible or in tradition, the question returns, Who shall interpret tradition? The Man of God must get a second authorized interpreter for that; and as it will not do to exercise private judgment in explaining the second any more than the first, he must get a third authorized interpreter for that; and

a fourth for the third ; and so on by a similar necessity ; and as he can never arrive at a point where private judgment will be any safer than it was at the first step, or at any step after the first, he will require an infinite series of authorized interpreters, which is absurd. Therefore, the plain meaning of the text, (divested of jesuitical cobwebs,) is this : Let the Man of God use his Bible as a book ought to be used, employing lexicons, commentaries, and tradition, as servants to collect evidence, remembering always that the strongest evidence *lies in the text itself*. And when all the evidence is gathered which can be come at, let him decide in the fear of God. In so doing, the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Paul declares, he shall find that Bible, for the uses presently to be considered, profitable to such a degree that therewith alone he may esteem himself *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*.

This is an estimate placed upon his word by Almighty God ; not to be whittled down by any device of hardy criticism. It is His three-pliéd, triple-folded, defiance to every art of subtle quibbling. Once ascertain what ground is fairly covered by the four specifications, and then, upon that ground, you know that the

Man of God is "*perfect*;" and if that should by any possibility be misunderstood, you know that he is "*thoroughly furnished*." And if desperate ingenuity should begin to say "suppose" this, and "suppose" that emergency under these specifications, it is added finally — "*unto ALL good works*."

What, then, are the four specifications, and what ground do they fairly cover?

1. "FOR DOCTRINE." This specification fairly covers the whole ground of the teaching of truth — truth on all subjects necessary to make wise unto salvation. The word "*didaskalia*" — here rendered "doctrine" — embraces all truth proper to Revelation, and useful to the Man of God, as a teacher — all truth which he will be ever called on to understand himself, or to exhibit to others, whether relating to "doctrines," technically so called, or to ordinances, forms, facts, &c. I maintain that the usage of the New Testament writers, fairly includes within this word the whole of truth necessary to the edification of the body of Christ; and it means — not only that the Bible is a repository of all such truth, but — that when fairly admitted to the mind in the manner already explained, it "is able," by an omnipotent

energy, "to MAKE WISE UNTO SALVATION;" the Bible is a TEACHER.*

But here an objection is started. Truth, it is said, is one; and therefore the fact that honest minds do differ on every side, proves that the Bible is *not* a sufficient teacher.

To this I reply:—Never was there a more jesuitical fallacy. You might as well say, Medicine is one; and therefore, unless men all take the same dose they never can be cured. The fact is, truth, like medicine, if it be one, is yet multitudinous; and minds, like maladies, are various. Hence, it is an utter impossibility to create absolute unity of belief. Even on what we are pleased to term fundamental truths, there must exist different modes of seeing; different grades of believing; different forms of expressing; and the only unity that ever will be attained before the Resurrection of the Just, on earth, will be a unity of thinking differently, in love.

You might as well attempt to compel seven men, with seven glasses, each with a particular

* NOTE.—I remark here, that in speaking of "the Bible *alone*," I wish to be understood as including those influences of the Holy Spirit, which are solemnly pledged to attend its diligent and careful study.

hue of the rainbow, to see all things of the same color, on pain of excommunication, as to compel all minds, of ten thousand diverse mental optics, to behold all things of one catholic, leaden hue.

You might as well attempt to pack cannon-balls in a box, so tightly as to leave no space between, as to pack minds in a Church, I care not by what Hierarchical lever you screw them, so tightly that they do not differ, and yet *think*. Leaden balls may be compressed so as to touch all round — so may heads, of the same material.

Consequently, of all the immense delusions that ever bestrode the mind of man, with a waking nightmare, that of a Church, with an absolute unity of opinion, is the most astounding; and of all usurpations of the Divine prerogative, which have desolated the Church, that of testing Church-fellowship by *OPINION*, instead of by experience and practice, is the most ruinous.

Minds differ like faces, like forms, like every thing that God ever made, or the devil ever marred; and the crowning glory of God's word is, that it will, out of its multitudinous, inexhaustible store of truth, fit to each mind

that can be saved, that particular truth, yea, that particular shade of the same fundamental truth, necessary to save that mind. The only thing that can, the only thing that does prevent the Bible from having this effect on every one of you this day, in this house of God, is, you do not read it; you do not wish to be saved by it. You find nothing in it. On you it has no influence, no chance to have any. This is fatal. God's blessed spirit is so solemnly linked with that word, by covenant and in actual fulfilment, that that word is ABLE to give the docile student true views of God, of self, of expiation, reconciliation, life, death, resurrection, and the world to come — views, which, though they may differ from mine, are true; and differ from mine only because his mind differs from mine.

Oh! be it forever understood, that the only unity of faith, possible to us now, is the unity of RELIANCE on Divine testimony, with the unimpeded exercise of each mind, irresponsible to the mass, in making estimate of that testimony. In this view, the Bible is a living miracle among us. It does save men while disputing certain fundamental truths. The constitutional diversity of minds is so great, the knowl-

edge possible to us so limited, the themes in question so vast, our logical medium so imperfect, that it is probable good men often rank on opposite sides of apparently fundamental questions, when God sees that as to what is really fundamental, they agree.

I can well conceive, and I rejoice in the thought, that the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose name be forever blessed, has been kindled like a pure altar-flame, never to be extinguished to all eternity, in hearts of men, whose intellects could never agree in rendering a philosophical account either of his person or his work. They may have thought their theories fundamental, and have achieved long renown in battling therefor, while their God saw that the things they learned of Jesus, that made them love him, although so simple as to be quite overlooked in the arena, were eternally fundamental.

Hence, the grand work of the Man of God is not so much to elaborate truth from the word of God, and present it in systematic form for the acceptance of his flock, as, coming all glowing from the study of the precious word, unfolding its holy beauties, to kindle in their careless hearts a similar ardor, and lead them to the same central sun of life and light.

The Bible, then, on all subjects, personal, pastoral, ecclesiastical, which he may be called to handle, is, to the Man of God, so boundless a repository, so superior an instructor, that therewith alone, he may regard himself as PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.

2. FOR REPROOF. This specification fairly covers the whole ground of the prevention, or extirpation of error. In familiar language, the keeping the Church pure from heresy. That this is the force of the term "*Elengchon*," will be perceived by any one who will compare the New Testament usage on this word, and its parent verb. The Bible will not only teach truth, it will kill error. It may not kill every thing that you and I may consider error. It certainly will, when used rightly, extirpate what God regards as such, and be it remembered that He alone is to pass that sentence. That the Bible will have this effect, follows of course from the first specification, for truth and error cannot exist together. They are as fire and water. The more truth is taught, the more error dies. This also follows, because the word of God is constructed with direct reference to the cardinal errors of the human mind, by a

divine reasoner, with such tremendous ability, that those errors cannot live under a conscientious study of that word. This also follows, because the scripture is self-interpreting, self-rectifying, self-vindicating. And the sure way of testing an error claiming scriptural support, is: call it to the spot where it claims parentage, and call in the rest of the scripture to testify. In this way, erroneous interpretations must die, and do die. And if there be any interpretation that will not die so, then in God's name, let it live.

Whether, therefore, in a private Christian, or a pastor; whether in the Church, or any other ecclesiastical body, God's estimate of his Bible is, that for the keeping out of heresy, with that alone, the Man of God may consider himself **PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.**

How nearly, then, they agree with the mind of God, who think that to have no other test but the Bible, is to swing loose from wholesome restraint, judge ye.

For my part, I seem to see the stamp of Divine displeasure, broadly and crushingly fixed upon any other test, or barrier of error, besides the Bible alone.

3. **FOR CORRECTION.** The third specification naturally covers the entire ground of Church discipline, including the whole fabric of Church government, whether of members or of ministers. This is the usual signification of the term. There is not an offence against Christ, nor against the cause of Christ, whether in the Church simple, or aggregate, which cannot be brought to conviction, just as far by the use of the Bible alone, as God ever intended to have it convicted; and if there be an offence which cannot be thus convicted, it is not an offence against Christ, but against a human figment, and such an offence—let it be committed.

For such purposes, then, with the Bible alone, the Man of God is PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.

4. **FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.**—This fourth and last specification fairly covers the whole ground of training, or schooling, or education in personal holiness, commonly called experimental religion.

God's estimate of his Bible is, that when used according to its own requirements, it will develope all Christian growth,—patience, faith, hope, love, joy, meekness, gentleness, integrity, purity, practical morality.

What book is best to put into the hands of a child? Whose words best for infant voices to repeat? "The words of the Lord are pure words." Can you find any simpler words than those of Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven"? Can any thing more happily fashion the minds of your children,—intellect, imagination, taste, feeling, principle and all,—than the holy strains of David? And why should it not be so? Cannot He, who is the father of us all, attemper his language to the wants of those little ones, "Whose angels in Heaven do always behold the face of our Father which is in Heaven"? And whom will you trust to tell the story of our Lord's sufferings and death—their cause and their results? Suppose Jesus, as of old, a wayfaring man, should enter your house, and, drawing your child to his arms, should tell him of that last supper, of that garden agony, of that mock trial, of those insults, buffetings, scourgings; those final scenes of Calvary, those three days and three nights in the heart of the earth; bending the while upon the breathless listener, those fascinating eyes of tenderness,—would you dare to interrupt him? Would

you dare to caution your child what *doctrine* he should find there?

Parents of this congregation, try the power of God's words upon the pliant natures of your children. Plant those living words deep. GOVERN them the while; LIVE Christ before them; and when you are old and gray-headed, you shall surely see them following "Wisdom's ways, which are pleasantness, and all her paths, which are peace." Infidelity cannot entangle them; vice cannot fasten her fangs upon them; or if they do, you will see them escape again, like a bird from the snare of the fowler.

The Bible can never be outgrown. Other books that please our infant ear, fall off, and grow stale to our maturer age. Not so with God's words. Precisely the same passage that charmed the child of seven, will charm the gray-haired sage of seventy — yea, open to him depths of meaning, which childhood could not fathom.

Christian, commencing divine life; inquirer, just ready to begin; let me tell you that Christianity is growth, not petrification. The Christian is the branch of a vine, and that vine is Christ, the WORD. If you then would be graft-

ed into Christ, I assure you it will not be without diligent, private, original searching of the Bible.

In conclusion, then, see what God's own estimate is of his Bible.

For the inculcation of all truth necessary to salvation ; for the refutation of error and extirpation of heresy ; for the conduct of discipline, whether of presbyters or laity ; for the education of children and adults in personal holiness and practical morality. The Bible is so far profitable, that therewith the Man of God is **PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.**

This, men and brethren, is the estimate that, with all lowliness, we accept and verify. This is the fundamental principle on which this enterprise was commenced, avowed from the very first, on which every advancement has been made ; on which, under God's blessing, our future success is to depend. If you seek to know the doctrines, the spirit, the character of this enterprise from afar, by some human mask, or badge, or insignia, you will surely be at a loss what to think of us. But if you are a student of God's word ; if you know what it is to subject your intellect to the mind of God ;

if you have ever been taught how to read, and think, and believe only at first hand, from God's beloved word : if, believing, you have obeyed, and if you ever then come within the sound of the services of this temple, you will know at once where you are, and what you are. Your heart will leap to us by the mighty response of a kindred nature, and you will be to us a brother.

Brethren ! This is, shall I say, **PROTESTANTISM**? Nay ; there is a nobler word, — **CHRISTIANITY**. The principle I have this day exhibited, is the foundation of all Christianity. The realization of this principle is our Life. For no other principle is it worth our while to contend ; but for this, “ **THE FAITH** once delivered to the saints,” let us contend earnestly. Let us hold up our standard on high. Let us send abroad our watchword upon the wings of the wind ! Let us make it known, and felt, and believed, that the Bible, as God wrote it, every man his own interpreter, responsible only to God, is our rule, our only teacher, and that therein, for all truth to be inculcated, all error to be extirpated, all discipline to be enforced, all holiness to be attained, we, as a people and a pastor, do deem ourselves **PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS**.



SECOND DISCOURSE.

IN the further consideration of the subject this morning presented to your view, having already established the first proposition, viz: "The Bible is a creed, sufficient, under God's blessing, to regulate the belief, experience, and practice of the whole Christian world," I now proceed to establish the second, viz: "The substitution of any other creed for any of these purposes, is one step in APOSTACY."

But what is the substitution of any other creed? Not the publishing, in book-form, of a system of doctrines, which any man, or body of men, suppose to be contained in the Bible. It is right to compare, to harmonize, to systematize; it is right to publish, to defend, to propagate. This is not what we mean by substitution.

Nor is it the mere publication, defence and propagation of a book, by any man, or body of men, as containing THE system of doctrines

taught in the Bible. That this would be an unwise presumption, I must believe. Man's mind is finite; the teachings of the Bible, infinite. How can men then, give THE system, while their minds are physically too small! Humbly must we confess that there is scarce a question started in God's word, which does not depend for its complete solution, on facts and relations unseen; which does not revolve in an orbit so vast, that the small arc we see, cannot afford the elements necessary to form a calculation; which does not sweep out far beyond our horizon, and link in with invisible emergencies.

Hence, to pronounce the results of the research of three score years and ten, THE system, is a daring deed, as daring as for the astronomer to say, this is THE system of astronomy, ignorant, as yet, on what unknown path, about what unknown centre, our sun is travelling; as daring as for the geologist to say, this is THE system of the earth, ignorant, as yet, of what is twenty miles below the surface; as daring as for the chemist, or the physiologist, to say, this is THE system of chemistry, or physiology, ignorant, as yet, of the nature of electricity, or the vital principle; or rather, as

daring as for an Academy of Sciences to come forward and say, this is **THE** system of universal science, while there is not a science in the sisterhood yet out of swaddling bands.

Would not these exhibit presumption? But if the Bible be of God, is it not vast as Nature? And is it not a precisely similar presumption to say, this is **THE** system of Doctrines contained in the Bible? How much more fitting to say, "These are parts of his ways; but the thunder of his power, who can understand!" Yet, however we may censure such a course as unwise presumption, it is not the substitution which we are to examine.

What, then, is such substitution?

It is, after having presumed to publish such a book, and to say, "This is **THE** system of doctrines contained in the Word of God," to go further, and require the acceptance of that book by every candidate for licensure or ordination, as a test of his qualification. It is this which I shall attempt to show is one step in **APOSTACY**.

I. Because it is a direct contradiction of the unequivocal teaching of the Holy Ghost.

The estimate which God has set upon his word is, the Man of God, who sincerely re-

ceives and adopts the Bible in the best exercise of his natural faculties of interpretation, is PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.

We contradict this. We virtually declare, the Man of God, who sincerely receives and adopts the Bible, in the best exercise of his natural faculties of interpretation, is NOT perfect; NOT thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Nay, he is so imperfect, so poorly furnished, that we will not license, nor ordain him. That is to say, he shall suffer the natural inconvenience and penalty that such refusal inevitably will bring.

Having thus virtually annulled God's statute, and affixed a penalty to the obedience of it, we set up our own statute, viz: the Man of God, who sincerely receives and adopts the Bible, *and this creed*, according to the best of his natural faculties in interpreting them, is *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*.

This is what must strike every unprejudiced mind as real apostacy. Let me illustrate. Compare this with a well known feature of the Romish apostacy. The Bible declares that there is one mediator between God and man,

Jesus Christ the righteous, and that there is salvation in none other; that his blood cleanseth from all sin, &c. What, in this cardinal point, is the very gist of Roman apostacy? Denying Christ? No. Denying that he is the Mediator? No. What then? She adds other mediators, the virgin, the saints. This is recognised by all Protestants as the very essence of her apostacy on this point. But, men and brethren, I submit to you whether the case in hand be not precisely parallel. God declares that the Man of God, who sincerely receives and adopts the Bible, is *perfect*, for certain specified purposes. We declare that the Man of God who sincerely receives and adopts the Bible, *and this creed*, is perfect for the same specified purposes.

God declares that Christ as a mediator is perfect. Rome declares that Christ *and the saints*, as mediators, are perfect. Now, if the latter be apostacy, why not the former? Do not we and Rome, so far, stand on precisely similar ground?

II. But I judge it to be a real step in apostacy, because it has arisen, and is advancing, in the same mysterious, stealthy way, out of the midst of good men, and good motives, that

saint-worship arose. The rise of saint-worship was prophesied by St. Paul, as a revival, under a Christian dress, of the ancient pagan worship of good demons. I. Tim. iv: 1.

Now, how was it brought about in its earliest stages? By bold, bad men? By a general vote of apostacy? Ah, no! These "hypocritical liars," with "consciences seared as with a red-hot iron," mentioned by the apostle, were the product and the support of the mature, full-grown apostacy, stalking forth a grim and ghastly ghost of defunct paganism, evoked from hell, and clad in the fleecy vestments of the Lamb.

The stupendous mystery of satanic skill was, that he contrived to have martyrs substituted for discarded demons, by the pious, unsuspecting co-operation of godly men — men, ready in their turn to become martyrs. They were the unconscious tools, in the hands of that arch-plotter of ruin, to bring about the fatal resurrection of that very old paganism, (under a truly godly form,) from whose fires they had barely escaped.

How did it begin?

In a pious and decent respect for the memory of the martyrs. Nothing more. In cherish

ing and defending their memories. It was fostered, creeping step by step, from affectionate remembrance to respectful veneration; from respectful veneration to superstitious adoration; by such men as Eusebius, Theodoret, Basil the great, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nysen, Chrysostom, and almost all the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries.

Innocently it flourished in their unsuspecting hands, and peacefully and piously it passed beyond their day, to a horrid consummation.

So it was with fasting from meats.

So it was with forbidding to marry.

So with every feature of the Romish Apostacy.

Precisely in the same manner, is this feature of what I must call Protestant apostacy, now arising—creeping stealthily through its first innocent stages, among good men, from good motives; and precisely in the same manner will it pass beyond our day to a similar consummation.

Our best, most humble, most devoted servants of Christ, are fostering in their midst what will one day, not long hence, show itself to be of the spawn of the dragon. They shrink from any rude word against creeds, with the same sensitiveness with which those holy Fa-

thers would have shrunk from a rude word against the rising veneration of saints and martyrs, which they were fostering. They would have supposed that he who should have plainly remonstrated with them, and told them that they were taking a step in apostacy, was an enemy to religion. They would have told him, perhaps, he was doing the devil's work, just as our holy Fathers, with equal solicitude, say, when one attempts to disclose the necessary tendency of creeds. While, in point of fact, in both cases, it is the holy Fathers themselves, who are doing the devil's work. For,

III. This is a radical feature of Romanism, revived under a Protestant form, just as really as saint-worship was a radical feature of paganism, revived under a Christian form.

What has been a radical feature of the Roman apostacy from the first, more marked than this one thing, as admitted by all Protestants, that she claimed the sole right of interpreting the Bible? Has not Rome always either deprived the people of the Bible altogether, or else set up that ineffable Church fog of tradition for an infallible interpreter? And how was it that this celebrated feature of the Romish system took its rise? I answer in the

voice of history, by creed-making. It was the creed-making power, which began in the second century, crept slowly and stealthily forward, was first exercised in a general council in the fourth century, which afterwards centred in the Vatican, and set its veto on the Bible.

The making an authoritative creed, to which the clergy were compelled to subscribe, was the first step; the absolute prohibition of the Bible to the people was the last step. The difference between was only the growth of the principle. For, the right to dictate what a man shall find in the scripture, and the right to dictate that he shall find nothing, are one.

Look at the facts. The apostolic churches, during the whole of the first century, had no creed but the Bible. The apostles' creed, even, the simplest, oldest, most harmless of the species, was not made by the apostles. "There is," says Mosheim, "indeed, extant, a brief summary of Christian doctrines, called the apostles' creed, and which from the fourth century onward, was attributed to Christ's ambassadors themselves; but at this day, all who have any knowledge of antiquity, confess unan-

imously that this opinion is a mistake, and has no foundation."

And still more, when it was made it was not used as a *test*. It will be observed, that in this argument, "Creed," means not articles of belief, but articles made authoritative *tests*.

There was no such test in existence during nearly the whole of the first two centuries. They never were heard of until after COUNCILS appeared. During the whole of that time churches were independent, all members equal. Each church chose her own officers, and each church was a Presbytery in itself. The modern forms of Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies, were unknown. The first idea of them was borrowed from the political world by the Greeks, who were versed in such features of civil administration. The idea of an authoritative creed is, therefore, exclusively political. It is not of Christian parentage. "These Councils," says Mosheim, "of which no vestige appears before the middle of this (second) century, changed nearly the whole form of the Church, for by them, in the first place, the ancient rights and privileges of the people were very much abridged, and on the other hand, the influence and authority of the

Bishops were not a little augmented."

By thus consolidating the churches, by delegates, into a political union, was formed a HIERARCHY. For the delegates, little by little, transformed themselves into legislators, and avowed that Christ had given them power to make laws of faith and practice for the people. Things went on gradually until A. D. 325, when the first General Council was called, and the first general creed made, viz: the Council of Nice, and the Nicene Creed.

How was this Council called?

By the authority of Christ? By the authority of the Church? It was called by the authority of a man who was not even a member of the Christian Church—a man who was an Emperor, and that of Rome. The Roman Emperor, by his absolute political power, assembled a General Council of the Christian Church! Three hundred and eighteen Bishops fully settled the doctrines taught in the Bible, banished Arius into Illyria, and compelled his followers to subscribe. Here is the happy origin of authoritative creeds. Had I time, I could go on to show you how they multiplied in swarms; creating and fomenting those very divisions they were designed to suppress—part and par-

cel of that ambitious and apostate Hierarchy. I would show you how the creed-making power, thus unknown to apostolic times, thus a political idea, thus first generally exercised under a Roman Emperor's mandate, became the constant, inspiring spirit of the apostacy in all its stages, and having masked and gagged the Bible with creed upon creed, tradition upon tradition, fable upon fable, lodged at last in the Papal chair, and launched imperial thunders against the Bible itself. This is what I mean by saying that the creed-making power was a radical feature of Roman apostacy; and this power it is that we are now reviving under a Protestant form. For,

IV. We are doing the self-same things by which that creed-making power then and there began; and, strange to say, are using the self-same arguments therefor. What were the Romish arguments, from the days of the Nicene debate, down to the pontifical anathema? They were, Truth is one — therefore true believers cannot differ. But they *do* differ. Therefore there is heresy. Heresy must be kept out. Make a creed to keep it out; and as to which side is heresy, "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus,*" — that is, heresy is

the opinion which is in the *minority*. A strange rule in a world where wise heads are certainly not generally in the majority, but a rule eminently convenient and practical. Yes. Shear off the troublesome thinkers, and sing stagnant hallelujahs! This by way of keeping the Church pure! This has been Rome's policy. Mother of harlots! How holily has she protected the PURITY OF THE CHURCH!

Now, unless my ears deceive me, Protestants are using the same arguments; only for church, read denomination. We must keep the denomination pure! We must keep out heresy, i. e. the opinion of the minority; and although God has said his Bible is PERFECT for this very purpose, we say, No. We want a creed to boot. And is not this just the same as it was when Rome said it? Was saint-worship any better than demon-worship? Is denomination creed-power any better than Catholic creed-power?

V. Especially when we consider that the Protestant Church is making progress towards the same results, a virtual prohibition of the Bible — progress more silent, but more rapid. Let one fact suffice.

When the Westminster Assembly of Divines

formed their Confession and Catechisms, it was proposed by the Scots Commissioners, that the answers of the shorter catechism should be subscribed by the members of that body, the proposal was rejected after discussion, as an *unwarrantable imposition* ; and not for forty years was subscription made a test of ministerial standing. Three hundred and twenty-five years were necessary to produce the Nicene creed ; but it took one Protestant denomination only forty years to turn what their own Assembly scouted as an unwarrantable imposition, into an iron rule.

This shows the rapid movement of Protestant apostacy. At this rate, how long before the ultimatum ? Do you say it is impossible that creeds such as ours, in the hands of such good men, such holy men, so busy in spreading the Bible every where, can yet result in the prohibition of that Bible ?

I answer that the Nicene creed was as good as our creeds, and the Nicene Fathers as holy men ; but they ended in a prohibition of the Bible. So shall we, unless we stop short ; yea, even though it should rain Bibles. For,

VI. The creed system is now exerting upon the clergy of the Protestant churches, a secret,

unsuspected, but tremendous power against the Bible—a power of *fear*. Yes, while it professes to venerate and defend the Bible, it is virtually undermining it. That is always Satan's way. He revived pagan worship in the midst of men who were fierce against it. How? He cheated them! He baptized it! They thought it was pious. So we. Busy in fighting Rome, wide awake to see *she* does not snatch our Bibles and burn them, we are yet letting *him* cheat us out of them in a new way, a pious way. We do not see him.

Oh, that God might unscale our eyes before it be too late! or our Bible will be dead and buried, and hope lost! Do you ask me to explain this mystery? Reflect a moment. Who are our Protestant ministry? How are they ushered on the stage?

They generally go from the bosom of the family to college, without seeing the world at all. There they are secluded for four years, which seem in after-life like an elysian dream. Thence they step directly into the Theological Seminary; and thence, after three years more of seclusion, into the pulpit.

What chance have they to know the world? All they have known is HOME, and seven year's

sequestered study. What do they know of business? What do they know of men, and things, and the stern struggles of life? They go forth, in a majority of cases, babes in worldly wisdom; rich, perhaps, in literary lore, in piety and purity; but ah! wholly unaccustomed to buffet the wild world's waves. The severest crisis of their whole life is, when they are beginning the lesson of practical life. They are dependent, hopelessly dependent, on their profession. Like new-fledged birds, they have never fairly tried their wings. Sensitive, sincere, timorous, naturally anxious for success, in suspense, the least professional failure strikes like a knell at their heart.

I have heard my father say, that when a situation was first offered him, he felt as though, if he failed in that, he never should have another chance as long as he lived.

And all this, you will perceive, is but the natural effect of their training.

Now, what sort of an ordeal is prepared for them in society? i. e. religious society, for they know no other. Let us see.

The religious world has what is called a public sentiment of its own, and this is formed chiefly by the great evangelical denominations.

Other denominations are, owing to their paucity of numbers, less perceived. By one or the other of these denominations, the first fact is, the young candidate is to be licensed; for public sentiment has settled, that an unlicensed preacher is no preacher at all. He must have license, then; all his hopes centre on that. But there is not one of these great evangelical denominations from which he can get license, unless he will subscribe the creed of that denomination. In other words, the Protestant evangelical denominations have so tied up one another's hands, and their own, that, between them all, a man cannot become a preacher at all, any where, without accepting some book besides the Bible.

It is true, each denomination says, "We inflict no penalty — we only decline to receive into our ranks, one who does not agree with us." And this is so specious, it sounds so reasonable, that it might deceive the very elect; but it is the most consummate stroke of infernal craft, and doubly-distilled jesuitism.

It is like Rome, handing over the victims of the Inquisition to the civil arm, charging it to do them no harm, and then piously lauding her own lamb-like disposition. It is true, the de-

nominations do not do the candidate any harm, they only silently leave him to his inevitable fate.

Unlicensed, without moral affinities with the minor sects, alone, before he has formed the self-sustaining habits of a man, before he has yet tried his armor, self-distrustful, generally poor, often in debt, inexperienced, he finds an invisible, intangible POWER has entangled and enveloped him in complicate, writhing folds. The frown of society is upon him, public sentiment is against him — the public sentiment of *good men*, yea, of the best and most devoted! He is whispered to be *unsound, unsafe, heretical*. He is called by every sectarian name most frightful to ears evangelical, right or wrong; and yet nobody does it. He is smitten; he looks here and there, behind and before; he can see nobody. And thus he is politely, and respectfully, and silently, and invisibly CRUSHED. He is in the religious world, what a broken-down candidate is in the political, *dead*.

Now, there never was a torture of the Inquisition more exquisitely suited to extort conformity from an agonized victim. Not the body, but the mind, is on the rack. Every most noble feeling is tried to the utmost. His natural

need of livelihood, his care of family and of friends, his sense of reputation, his honest ambition, his tastes, his intellectual habits, his hopes of usefulness, yea, the very inmost, sacred emotions of his devotional experience, are here taken hold of—in the dark—by an unseen relentless, ruthless hand—and are wrung, and racked, and wrenched, to the last extreme of mental torture. And there is no eye to pity, no arm to save. The public will not hear him. He is nobody; an outcast; a madman.

This, my friends, is the PENALTY, which good men, out of good motives, unconsciously, yet really, are proposing to the eyes of every candidate for the ministry — this intense spiritual martyrdom. During seven years it stares him in the face, during the whole forming-time of his opinions. And for what?

For daring to say, “I do not receive your creed as containing the system of doctrines contained in the Bible;” — for daring to say what God has said, “With that Bible alone, I am perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” For repeating and holding on upon this declaration of God, he falls a spiritual martyr. And is not that an apostacy, then, that martyrs him? And is not the Protestant

church apostate? Oh, remember, the final form of the apostacy shall rise, not by Rome's aggressive march; not by the Pope's long arm, outstretched to snatch our Bible; not by crosses, processions, baubles. We understand all that. Apostacy never comes on the outside. It *developes*. It is an apostacy that shall spring into life within us; an apostacy that shall martyr a man who believes his Bible ever so holily; yea, who may even believe what the creed contains, but who may happen to agree with the Westminster Assembly, that proposed as a test, it is an unwarrantable imposition! That is the apostacy we have to fear, and is it not already formed?

Accept the Bible and the book, and you may put your own private construction on both, as every one *does*. Accept the Bible, and put your own private construction on that — the great paw of the Beast is on you. This is what I call taking the Bible out of the hands of the ministry.

Will it be said that these fears are imaginary? Imaginary? Did not the Rev. John M. Duncan, of Baltimore, in the year 1825-6, or thereabouts, sincerely believe the Bible? Did he not even believe substantially the confession

of faith? And was he not, for daring to say what the Westminster Assembly said, that to require the reception of that Creed as a test of ministerial qualification, was an unwarrantable imposition, brought to trial, condemned, excommunicated, and the pulpit declared vacant?

There is nothing imaginary in the statement that the Creed-Power is now beginning to prohibit the Bible, as really as Rome did, though in a subtler way. During the whole course of seven years' study, the Protestant candidate for the ministry sees before him an authorized statement, spiked down and stereotyped, of what he **MUST** find in the Bible, or be martyred. And does any one, acquainted with human nature, need be told that he studies under a tremendous pressure of motive? Is that freedom of opinion? — "the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free"? Rome would have given that. Every one of her clergy might have studied the Bible to find there the Pontifical creed on pain of death. Was that liberty?

Hence I say, that liberty of opinion in our Theological Seminaries, is a mere form. To say nothing of the thumb-screw of criticism, by which every original mind is tortured into

negative propriety, the whole boasted liberty of the student consists in a choice of chains — a choice of handcuffs — whether he will wear the Presbyterian handcuff, or the Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal or other Evangelical handcuff. Hence it has secretly come to pass that the ministry themselves dare not study their Bibles. Large portions thereof are seldom touched. It lies useless lumber; or if they do study and search, they dare not show their people what they find there. There is something criminal in saying anything new. It is shocking to utter words that have not the mould of age upon them.

For through the ministry the same spirit has been conducted to the people. The same penalties hang over them. The denominations are so nearly balanced, the strife for power is so keen between them, that every fancied departure from that creed, is seized to make political capital, as really as in any political campaign. Houses must be built; salaries must be raised. This requires wealth. Wealth requires numbers and patronage. This creates a servile dread of novelty, for every thing that another party can get hold of, strikes at the gold. Therefore, the people watch their minister, and

the minister is afraid of his people. For if he studies independently, if he goes outside of the book, if he slips the handcuff, the people tremble — it will not please — the opposition will seize it — we shall be unpopular — we shall not succeed!

Oh, woful day! Oh, unhappy church of Christ! Fast rushing round and round the fatal circle of absorbing ruin! Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and *knowest not* that thou art poor, and miserable, and *blind*, and naked!

Thus are the ministry of the Evangelical, protestant denominations, not only formed all the way up, under a tremendous pressure of merely human fear, but they live, and move, and breathe, in a state of things radically corrupt, and appealing every hour to every baser element of their nature, to hush up the truth, and bow the knee to the power of apostacy.

Dimly does every one now and then see that things are going wrong. With sighs does every true heart confess that rottenness is somewhere, but ah, it is hopeless of reform. We all pass on, and the tide rolls down to Night.

The time has come when men, having itching ears, and forms of godliness without the

power, are heaping to themselves teachers, when they will not endure sound doctrine, but are turned aside unto fables. And the whole has come about stealthily, nobody knows how, among good men, out of good motives!

Was not this the way things went with Rome? Are we not living her life over again? And what do we see just ahead? Another General Council! A World's Convention! Evangelical Alliance and Universal Creed!

And what then is to be done? I know not what others may say, but if ever I shrink from declaring that the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is the perfect and thorough furniture of the Christian minister, and the Christian church, then may my right hand forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave unto the roof of my mouth.

Brethren, you see the standard that has been unfurled this day. What will you do? It is the standard of the Cross. It is the banner of the Spirit of the Lord! Rally around it. Away with your fears of other denominations! Away with false policy! Rally around this central principle, look to the Lord, and you are impregnable. The waves of the coming conflict which is to convulse Christendom to her cen

tre, are beginning to be felt. The deep heavings begin to swell beneath us. "All the old signs fail." "God answers no more by Urin and Thummim, nor by dream, nor by prophet." Men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth. Thunders mutter in the distance. Winds moan across the surging bosom of the deep. All things betide the rising of that final storm of divine indignation which shall sweep away the vain refuges of lies. When "the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire; with scatterings, and tempest, and hail-stones;" in that day, what shall save us? For judgment will begin at the house of God. What shall be our defence? Put your trust in Him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, on whose head are many crowns, who is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, whose name is called **THE WORD OF GOD!** For "behold! a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes rule in judgment, and **A MAN** shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest!" Even so, Lord Jesus! Come quickly! **AMEN.**







